

§ 501.3

civil disturbances incident to earthquake, fire, flood, or other public calamity endangering life or Federal property or disrupting Federal functions or the normal processes of Government, or other equivalent emergency so imminent as to make it dangerous to await instructions from the Department of the Army requested through the speediest means of communications available, an officer of the Active Army in command of troops may take such action, before the receipt of instructions, as the circumstances of the case reasonably justify. However, in view of the availability of rapid communications capabilities, it is unlikely that action under this authority would be justified without prior Department of the Army approval while communications facilities are operating. Such action, without prior authorization, of necessity may be prompt and vigorous, but should be designed for the preservation of law and order and the protection of life and property until such time as instructions from higher authority have been received, rather than as an assumption of functions normally performed by the civil authorities.

(b) Emergency firefighting assistance may be provided pursuant to agreements with local authorities; emergency explosive ordnance disposal service may be provided in accordance with paragraph 18, AR 75-15.

§ 501.3 Command authority.

(a) In the enforcement of the laws, Federal Armed Forces are employed as a part of the military power of the United States and act under the orders of the President as Commander in Chief. When commitment of Federal Armed Forces has taken place, the duly designated military commander at the objective area will act to the extent necessary to accomplish his mission. In the accomplishment of his mission, reasonable necessity is the measure of his authority, subject of course, to instructions he may receive from his superiors.

(b) Federal Armed Forces committed in aid of the civil authorities will be under the command of, and directly responsible to, their military and civilian superiors through the Department

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of the Army chain of command. They will not be placed under the command of an officer of the State Defense Forces or of the National Guard not in the Federal service, or of any local or State civil official; any unlawful or unauthorized act on the part of such troops would not be excusable on the ground that it was the result of an order received from any such officer or official. As directed by the Army Chief of Staff, military commanders will be responsive to authorized Federal civil officials.

§ 501.4 Martial law.

It is unlikely that situations requiring the commitment of Federal Armed Forces will necessitate the declaration of martial law. When Federal Armed Forces are committed in the event of civil disturbances, their proper role is to support, not supplant, civil authority. Martial law depends for its justification upon public necessity. Necessity gives rise to its creation; necessity justifies its exercise; and necessity limits its duration. The extent of the military force used and the actual measures taken, consequently, will depend upon the actual threat to order and public safety which exists at the time. In most instances the decision to impose martial law is made by the President, who normally announces his decision by a proclamation, which usually contains his instructions concerning its exercise and any limitations thereon. However, the decision to impose martial law may be made by the local commander on the spot, if the circumstances demand immediate action, and time and available communications facilities do not permit obtaining prior approval from higher authority (§ 501.2). Whether or not a proclamation exists, it is incumbent upon commanders concerned to weigh every proposed action against the threat to public order and safety it is designed to meet, in order that the necessity therefor may be ascertained. When Federal Armed Forces have been committed in an objective area in a martial law situation, the population of the affected area will be informed of the rules of conduct and other restrictive measures the military is authorized to enforce. These will normally be announced by